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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
November 19, 1976

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The Palestinians: After Lebanon

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Summary and Conclusions

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The Palestinians gravely miscalculated when they took sides in Lebanon's civil war. They have been dealt a decisive military defeat by the Syrians, previously their staunchest allies. In addition, the movement has lost most of the political standing it won

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at the 1974 Rabat summit, when the Palestine Liberation Organization was formally dubbed the sole representative of the Palestinians at the expense of King Husayn.

Certain conclusions seem to emerge in an examination of the post-Lebanon status of the Palestinians:

--The PLO will be unable to challenge Damascus for the foreseeable future, either in Lebanon or in broader Middle Eastern affairs.

--Arafat will do his best to play other Arab states off against Syria in order to salvage a sphere of autonomy. His success will be limited

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--Arafat is likely to retain his position as head of the PLO and spokesman for the Palestinians, even though he has come under attack from within the Palestinian movement. He probably will remain willing and able to commit the main body of the PLO to peace negotiations if he becomes convinced he can make concrete gains.

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--Although some Arab leaders would like to see the West Bank Palestinians playing a larger role within the Palestinian movement, thus diluting the role of the PLO, Israel's occupation policies discourage the development of an indigenous leadership, and the present West Bank mayors are generally committed to the existing PLO.

--Syria's domination of the PLO, control of Lebanon, and its closer ties with Jordan will give it a strong hand in the event of renewed Middle East negotiations.

--The PLO probably would be willing, if invited, to participate in a new round of peace talks as part of a joint Arab or mixed Syrian-Jordanian-Palestinian delegation.

--The PLO almost certainly is prepared to recognize Israel in return for the creation of an independent "Palestine" made up of the West Bank and Gaza. The Palestinians' refusal to make the first concession and Israel's refusal to deal with the PLO, however pose major impediments to restarting negotiations.

--Fedayeen leaders are under increasing pressure from their militant followers to turn again to terrorism to redress their grievances against the Arab states as well as Israel. This pressure will grow more intense if the Palestinians--involved in negotiations or not--realize no diplomatic gains.

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The Palestinian movement is at a crossroads. The fedayeen military defeat in Lebanon at the hands of Syrian troops [redacted]

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[redacted] has cost them their last independent power base. Militarily, they have lost men, equipment, and allies; politically, they have lost supporters, momentum, and prestige.

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